

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 HONG K 00881 280146Z

62

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 IO-14 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 SAJ-01 NIC-01 DRC-01 /134 W

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R 250450Z JAN 74

FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9353

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 881

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CH, UR

SUBJ: PEKING PLAYS UP SOVIET ESPIONAGE CASE

REF: HONG KONG 849 (WR 4)

SUMMARY. THE CHINESE HAVE ISSUED A LONG REVIEW OF THE CAPTURE OF THE SOVIETS EXPELLED FOR SPYING, OBVIOUSLY INTENDED TO BLOW UP THE INCIDENT AS A MAJOR CAUSE CELEBRE. WHILE CLEARLY A DEVIATION FROM POST-CULTURAL REVOLUTION NORM OF CHINESE DIPLOMACY, THIS TREATMENT FITS IN WELL WITH OTHER EFFORTS TO PORTRAY THE SOVIETS AS BENT UPON EXPANSION AND SUBVERSION. WHETHER OR NOT IT ALSO REFLECTS PRESSURE FROM SOME ELEMENTS IN THE LEADERSHIP AGAINST ANY MOVES OF ACCOMMODATION WITH THE SOVIETS MAY BECOME SOMEWHAT CLEARER AS CHINESE INTERNAL PROPAGANDA ON THE INCIDENT BECOMES AVAILABLE. END SUMMARY.

1. PEKING HAS FOLLOWED UP ITS JANUARY 19 STATEMENT ON THE

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 HONG K 00881 280146Z

EXPULSION OF TWO SOVIET DIPLOMATS, THEIR WIVES, AND AN INTERPRETER

ON SPYING CHARGES WITH A LONG NCNA (JANUARY 22) ITEM DETAILING THE CAPTURE OF THE SOVIETS CAUGHT IN THE ACT WITH THEIR CHINESE CONTACT. IT ALSO CARRIED THE PURPORTED CONFESSION OF THE CHINESE INVOLVED. ACCORDING TO NCNA, ONE OF THE TWO DIPLOMATS AND THE INTERPRETER WERE RECEIVING INTELLIGENCE AND HANDING OVER A NEW RADION, MONEY, A FAKE BORDER PASS, AND INSTRUCTIONS AT A RENDEZVOUS UNDER A BRIDGE OUTSIDE PEKING WHEN THEY WERE SURPRISED BY CHINESE PUBLIC SECURITY AND MILITIA PERSONNEL. WHEN THE OTHER DIPLOMAT AND THE WIVES ARRIVED TO PICK UP THEIR CONFEDERATES, THEY TOO WERE SEIZED. THE ENTIRE OPERATION WAS SAID TO HAVE BEEN FILMED.

2. THE CHINESE AGENT CLAIMED TO HAVE LEFT CHINA FOR THE SOVIET UNION IN 1967, RECEIVED ESPIONAGE TRAINING, AND REENTERED CHINA THROUGH SINKIANG IN JUNE 1972. AT THE TIME OF HIS CAPTURE, HE WAS SAID TO HAVE INFORMATION ON THE ACTIVITIES OF GRASS ROOTS PARTY ORGANIZATIONS AND MILITARY AND OTHER ACTIVITIES IN AREAS OF HEILUNGKIANG PROVINCE NEAR THE SOVIET BORDER.

3. NCNA ASSERTED THAT THE SOVIETS HAD BEEN SENDING ITS AGENTS AND SPIES INTO CHINA OVER A LONG PERIOD OF TIME TO COLLECT INTELLIGENCE, SET UP COUNTERREVOLUTIONARY ORGANIZATIONS AND ENGAGE IN OTHER SUBVERSIVE AND SABOTAGE ACTIVITIES AIMED AT SUBVERTING THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT IN CHINA. IT ALSO REPEATS THE JANUARY 19 STATEMENTS CHARGING THE SOVIET EMBASSY OF COMPLICITY IN THESE ACTIVITIES. MOST STRIKING IS THE REFERENCE ONCE AGAIN TO THE HYPOCRISY OF THE SOVIET OFFICIAL CLAIM THAT THEY WANT TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH CHINA. THIS POINT IS UNDERLINED IN A JANUARY 23 NCNA REPLAY OF EXCERPTS FROM AN ALBANIAN DENUNCIATION OF THE SOVIET ESPIONAGE ACTIVITIES AGAINST CHINA. THE ALBANIAN ARTICLE IS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT THESE ESPIONAGE ACTIVITIES ARE NOT ISOLATED INCIDENTS BUT "LINKS OF A WHOLE CHAIN OF HOSTILE ACTIONS" BY THE SOVIETS AGAINST CHINA.

4. THERE IS NO EXPLANATION IN THESE ARTICLES FOR THE DECISION TO DENY THE SOVIET EMBASSY ACCESS TO THE ACCUSED DIPLOMATS OR TO REFUSE EVEN TO ADMIT THAT THEY WERE BEING HELD (USMISSION NATO 0349). NCNA ALSO REPORTED THE RETURN OF THE CHINESE DIPLOMAT HELD IN IRKUTAK, CLAIMING HE HAD BEEN "FLAGRANTLY KIDNAPPED" BY THE SOVIETS, BUT PREDICTABLY DID NOT ADMIT THAT HE HAD BEEN EXPELLED

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 HONG K 00881 280146Z

IN RETALIATION FOR THE CHINESE ACTION.

5. COMMENT. THE LONG NCNA ARTICLE, WHICH APPARENTLY WAS REPRINTED IN THE PEOPLE' DAILY ON JANUARY 23, CLEARLY INDICATES THAT THE CHINESE WANT TO MAKE A CAUSE CELEBRE OF THE INCIDENT. THIS CONTRAST WITH POST CULTURAL REVOLUTION PRACTICE OF MINIMIZING DIPLOMATIC INCIDENTS AND POST-1969 EFFORTS TO AVOID STATE-TO-STATE CONFRONTATIONS

WITH THE SOVIET UNION MAY BE EXPLICABLE IN PART BY CHINA'S CURRENT WORLD-WIDE DRIVE TO PORTRAY THE SOVIETS AS EXPANSIONIST AND BENT ON SUBVERSION IN THIRD WORLD AND MEDIUM-SIZED COUNTRIES. THE CHINESE HAVE REGULARLY PUBLICIZED THE EXPULSION OF SOVIET DIPLOMATS FOR ESPIONAGE FROM OTHER COUNTRIES (INCLUDING A JANUARY 24 NCNA ITEM ON GHANA'S EXPULSION OF A SOVIET DIPLOMAT) AND THEY MAY HAVE FELT THEY SHOULD TRUMPET THE EFFORT BEING MADE AGAINST THEM.

6. IN ANY CASE, THIS IS THE FIRST PRC EXPULSION OF SOVIET PERSONNEL SINCE THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION. INTERESTINGLY THE CHINESE MONTHS AGO HAD THE DETAILS OF AN UNSUCCESSFUL

SOVIET AEROFLOT APPROACH IN PEKING TO SECURE INFORMATIONAL SERVICES OF A FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT IN RETURN FOR AEROFLOT TRANSPORTATION AND OTHER FAVORS. THE CHINESE OBVIOUSLY COULD HAVE EXPLOITED THAT INCIDENT BUT DID NOT.

7. THE HARSH TREATMENT OF THE SOVIETS AND THE SUBSEQUENT PROPAGANDA EFFORT AT THIS TIME ALSO SUGGESTS THE POSSIBILITY THAT SOME SEGMENTS OF THE CHINESE POLITICAL SCENE MAY WISH TO USE THE INCIDENT TO INSURE THAT SOVIET PROPOSALS FOR AN IMPROVEMENT OF STATE-TO-STATE RELATIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. THIS INTERNAL ANGLE--IF THERE IS ONE--SHOULD BECOME CLEARER IN HOW THE INTERNAL CHINESE MEDIA AND DISCUSSION GROUPS PLAY THE INCIDENT.  
ALLEN

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